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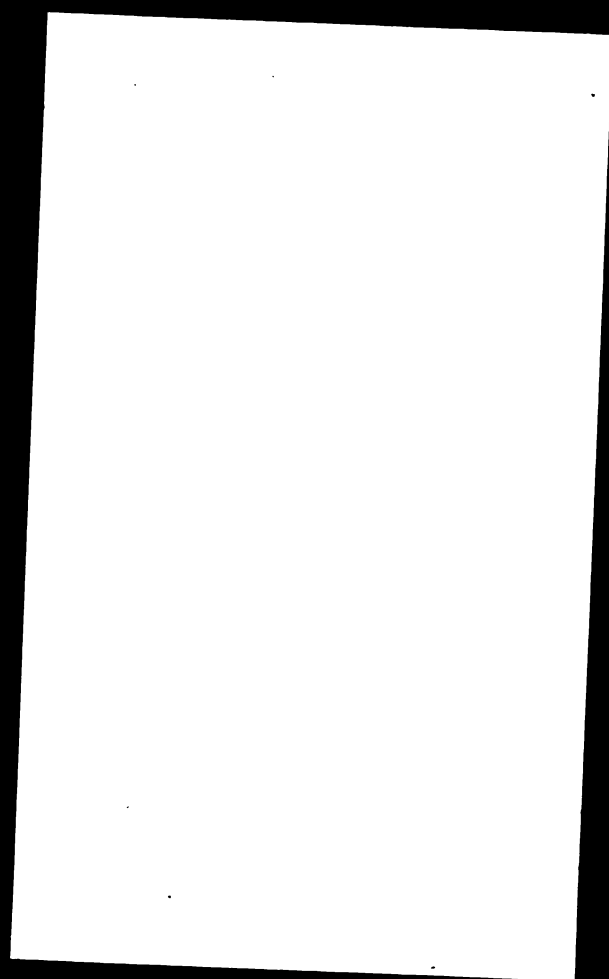
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27/02

To

Mrs Ann S. Stephens

from her old friend

Chas. J. Perce

Feb^y, 4th 1883,

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*St. J. R. H.
4/16/18 R. H. H.*

ROME.

BY

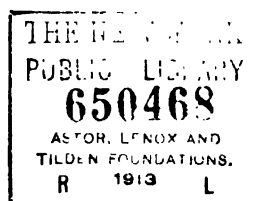
CHARLES J. PETERSON.

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PHILADELPHIA:

1883.

M. W. S.



NEW YORK
JUN 4
1913

TO

MY WIFE.

NEW YORK
1880
J. B. LIPPINCOTT
& CO.

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1

THE BORGHESI GARDENS.

Pan is not dead! These are the very places,
Where once his pipe was heard.
Here dwelt his fauns; you look yet for their faces,
When bush or brake is stirr'd.

These are the glades, where dryads crowned with flowers
Danced in the early morn.
Here nymphs and cupids kissed in fragrant bowers,
Ere Rome itself was born.

This is the antique pool, where naiads twining
Their arms in sportive show,
Leaped laughing in and swam, their round limbs shining
White as Soracte's snow.

The groves of ilex, from whose dim recesses,
Fresher than dews at dawn,
Tripped Dian with her maids, their virgin dresses
Chaste flutt'ring on the lawn.

The cool, green walk, with tall trees overhanging,
Where bright Apollo stood.
Triumphant, bow in hand, its silver twanging
Still ringing through the wood.

Here rode the panther god, with bacchantes dancing,
His pathway lotus-strewn,
The cymbals clashing, and the sunlight glancing
On loosened hair and zone.

The band is on the Pincian. Rising, falling,
Its music floods the air;
Or echoes through the glades, till fauns seem calling
And answ'ring everywhere.

Then comes a hush. But on the silence, trilling,
A bird pipes sweet and clear.
Yet no: for hark! through brake and thicket thrilling,
'Tis Pan himself I hear.

The fountains play; the balmy air is blowing;
Birds burst in rapturous strain—
Oh, Golden Age, this is your sunshine glowing:
Great Pan has come again!



IN THE FORUM.

The night is dark; the very stars are hidden;
Wild winds wail overhead.
What fearful shapes are these? What ghosts unbidden?
Can graves give up their dead?

The she-wolf's twina. A bloody phantom, turning,
Beckons its murd'rer past,
Who staggers on, the brand his forehead burning—
The Furies follow fast!

Black as some Alban storm, with lightnings flashing;
With rush like mountain flood;
Dark Tullia drives, her wheels of fire splashing
Deep in her father's blood.

Here Brutus comes; and starts, with look appalling,
And horror in his eyes.
For Cæsar waits; and "Thou, too, Brutus," calling,
Pursues as still he flies.

The air is full of groans, of stifled sighing,
From dungeons deep unseen.
"How cold it is," Jugurtha mutters, dying
In the dark Mamertine.

Each stone its legend has: Here Numa waited;
This saw the Tarquin's shame;
Here splendid Pompey went, with glory sated;
There Cleopatra came.

Here emperors rode in triumph: war-steeds bounding,
The eagles flashing out,
The tread of legions over all resounding,
Earth shaking with their shout.

Now weeds and wild vines flourish rank, uprooting
Pavement and shaft and wall.
From Cæsar's ruined halls an owl is hooting :
And death is over all.

The great clock strikes; the mighty sounds go booming
Far off, from dome to dome ;
Lo ! through the dusk the Coliseum looming—
It seems the ghost of Rome !



ON THE PINCIAN.

Heroes' and poets' busts and statues glancing,
As down the drives we go.
And through the trees the dappled sunshine dancing
On grassy lawns below.

The fountains, shooting to the sky, are singing
Their lulling, Old-World lay,
Visions of satyrs in dim woodlands bringing;
And grottoes cool away.

Yet here Lucullus feasted. Mænads shouted
Where now the palm-trees stand.
Here Messalina her foul orgies flouted.
Listen, it is the band.

There, to that gate below—vain human glory—
They dragged poor Nero dead.
And yonder, Belisarius—saddest story—
Old, blind, begged for his bread.

Come to the parapet. 'Tis dizzy gazing
On roof and square below,
But past them, redly in the sunset blazing,
Grim, dark San Angelo.

And Tiber, ever young, exultant flowing,
Fresh from the breezy pines;
The chestnut forests; the white oxen lowing
In distant Appenines.

Beyond, St. Peter's dome: so lightly lifting
Its vast bulk up on high,
It seems to float. The Ark of Promise drifting
Slow down the dark'ning sky.

The twilight goes. A thousand stars are throbbing
In depths of purple air;
With low, short gasps the cypresses are sobbing;
Then silence ev'rywhere.

And in the solitude, when Rome lies sleeping,
Spectral and weird below,
Comes Nero's ghost, and haunts the shadows, weeping
For the lost Long Ago.



THE CAMPAGNA AT NIGHT.

I see the lone Campagna round me lying,
Vague in the moon, and vast.
I hear the night-wind desolately sighing
From out the dead, dead Past.

The Alban hills, in purple shadows shrouded,
Like brooding augurs rise.
The Sabine mountains, snow-clad, walk unclouded,
Priestesses of the skies.

Across the plain the aqueducts come creeping,
Maimed dragons to their lair.
The myriad dead, unshriven, round me sleeping,
With white ghosts fill the air.

A phantom mist of cohorts, legions, streaming
Along the tomb-girt way,
To vanish in the city; millions gleaming
In skeleton array.

I seem to hear them, out of sight, still tramping
With dull, unearthly tread;
Or round the fun'ral Palatine encamping,
Whole armies of the dead.

Again the Coliseum shakes with thunder,
The shouts as martyrs die.
Again—but see! the white fog parts asunder;
The moon sails calm on high.

Rome, fierce and cruel ever, her dominions
Bought with her victims' blood;
Tearing the nations' hearts: with vulture pinions,
Above her prey she stood.

She sowed, and she has reaped. She took the wages
Of murder and of lust.
God let the iron gall her soul for ages,
And eat it out with rust.

Scourged through the centuries, her expiations
At last have won release.
White-robed, redeemed, she yet may lead the nations,
This time, to heights of peace!



A "MISERERE" AT ST. PETER'S.

The sunset, through the chapel-windows slanting,
Tints with its fading glow
The ranks of choristers, alternate chanting,
The kneeling crowd below.

They chant the Psalms; they chant the Lamentations.
The burden of their cry,
"Woe to the widowed city! Woe to nations!
The end of all is nigh!"

And sudden, through the dusk, the chant still calling,
There darts a lightning flash;
And then, as if the sky itself was falling,
The thunder, crash on crash!

One moment all things blazing, blinding, reeling ;
The next, intensest night.
The chant above the rolling thunder pealing,
Triumphant in its might.

Twelve lights before the Cross, like altar-fires,
Have burned ; and one for Him.
As each Psalm ends—a pause—a light expires ;
'Till only His shines, dim.

The last chant stops. The last light flickers, dying.
And through the awful gloom,
And still more awful hush, dumb souls seem crying
As at the Day of Doom.

But now, a solitary voice, imploring,
Shoots from the depths ; then dies.
Then soft begins again ; and swelling, soaring,
“Pity, oh! God,” it cries.

And now another, sadder still, that sobbing
Pours out its passionate prayer;
And others: till the mighty vault shakes, throbbing
With a lost world's despair.

Beseeching, weeping, agonizing, wailing,
Rings the heart-broken cry!
The choir, far up, tumultuous assailing,
And storming heav'n on high.

And then a blessed peace, like tranced waves dreaming
Along a summer shore.
And through the calm, celestial voices seeming:
That say, "Go, sin no more."

And still I hear that "*miserere*," ringing
Across the far-off years;
The woes and sorrows of all ages bringing;
Their agony and tears.

THE OBELISK OF THE VATICAN.

I stand beneath the Obelisk. Low plashing,
I hear the fountains play;
And vaguely watch them shooting up and flashing,
And drifting off in spray.

And then they fade. I see—or am I dreaming?—
The sand-hills and the Nile;
The awful Sphinx; the Pyramids; far gleaming,
Luxor, and Philæ's Isle.

Beneath the after-glow, the desert dreary
Turns to a magic sea.
Dim in the solemn twilight, Memnon weary
Watches Eternity.

Long trains of camels into darkness going,
Dusk palm-trees rustling—No!
The dream has fled; it is the fountains flowing,
And plashing as they flow.

And lo! of all that wondrous vision, only
The Obelisk remains.
But carved there, sentry of the ages lonely,
“Christ lives, Christ rules, Christ reigns.”

Yes, Isis and Osiris, vain immortals,
Like shrieking ghosts have fled.
The desert sand silts up their temple portals,
And Egypt's gods are dead.

Olympus at His coming rocked and quivered,
And shook its palsied crown.
And Jove, with crash like worlds by earthquakes shivered,
In chaos wild went down.

He lives and rules. Here martyrs died undaunted,
'Mid shouts of heathen rage.
Now, yonder dome, where holy Psalms are chanted,
And shall be, age on age!

He reigns. When once His sacred Word is spoken,
His earnest life began,
Wrong writhes and dies, the tyrant's chain is broken;
The god-like comes to man.

And when these worlds, these systems, wrecked are lying,
When time itself is spent,
Still shall He live, and rule, and reign, undying,
LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT!



IN THE CATACOMBS.

They lie all round me, countless in their number;
Each martyr with his palm.
No torture now can rack them. Safe they slumber,
Hushed in eternal calm.

I read the rude inscriptions: written weeping,
At night, with bitter tears.
Yet, what a tale they tell! their secret keeping
Through all these thousand years.

"*In Pace.*" Yes, in peace. By sword, or fire,
Or cross, or licitor's rod.
Virgin, or matron, youth, or gray-haired sire;
For all, the peace of God.

"*In Christo.*" Died in Christ. Oh! tragic story.
Yet, over shouts and cries
And lion's roar, they heard the saints in glory
Sing, up in Paradise.

"*Ad Deum.*" Went to God. Wide swung the portal;
Dim sank the sands away;
And chanting "Alleluiah," the immortal
Passed to Eternal Day.

Agnes, Cecilia, names undying ever.
What's Caesar's gain to this?
He lived for fame; they for their high endeavor.
And now, celestial bliss.

And Rome herself? Alas! her wisest teacher
Could teach but how to die.
His gospel was the sad one of the Preacher,
"All, all is vanity."

The martyrs saved her! Through the ages crying,
This nobler truth they give:
Life is but birth-throes. Death? it is not dying.
We pass to God—to live.

Oh! blessed hope. Oh! faith that conquers sorrow.
Pain, heart-break, all shall cease.
They are but gateways to a glad to-morrow.
“*In Pace.*” God is Peace!



FINIS.

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